



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501
406.444.3095
888.231.9393
406.444.0169 (TTY)
opi.mt.gov

To: Education Partners

From: Nancy Coopersmith
Assistant Superintendent
Department of Education Services

Date: April 14, 2015

Subject: Montana Educator Equity Plan

The U.S. Department of Education requires that by June 1, 2015, each State Education Agency (SEA) submit to the department a new State Educator Equity Plan in accordance with the requirements of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). As required by the ESEA, the SEA must, among other things, describe in its plan the steps it will take to ensure that "poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers." Each SEA must analyze what its stakeholders and data have to say about the root causes of inequities and must include strategies to close the equity gaps.

Superintendent Denise Juneau appointed a Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) leadership team to develop the plan, and she provided guidance to the team that no new data would be gathered for the plan. This will ensure that no additional data-gathering burden would be placed upon Montana educators. The OPI team includes the following key leaders: Mandy Broadus, Nancy Coopersmith, BJ Granbery, Sue Mohr, Dennis Parman, Linda Vrooman Peterson, and Frank Podobnik.

Please review the attached draft, dated April 14, 2015. The draft contains the sections required in the plan, including a timeline of activities. We welcome your comments and suggestions, particularly about the root causes of the inequities and your ideas about the strategies to address the equity gaps.

Please send your written comments no later than April 27, 2015, to Rehanna Olson at ROlson2@mt.gov. You may also contact any member of the OPI leadership team if you have questions about the draft plan. We welcome your comments, additions and suggestions, and we appreciate your assistance with this project!

2015 Montana Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Section 1. Introduction

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), requires state educational agencies (SEAs) receiving a Title I, Part A grant to submit a plan, developed by the SEA, in consultation with local educational agencies, teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators, other staff, and parents (ESEA section 1111(a)(1)). The plan submitted by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) describes the steps it will take “to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers, and the measures that the section 1111(b)(8)(C). (The term “state plan” refers only to State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.)

The Montana Constitution states:

- (1) “It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.” (Article X, Sec 1)
- (2) “The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” (Article X, Sec 2)

The provisions of the Montana Constitution provide the foundation for the 2015 Montana Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators.

2015 Montana Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

2015 Montana State Plan goal: All poor and minority children in Montana are taught on par with other children by experienced, qualified, and in-field teachers.

2015 Montana State Plan objective: By June 1, 2015, the OPI, in consultation with Montana education stakeholders, identify measures to evaluate and publicly report the progress of closing the identified equity gaps.

The Montana state plan will make continuous progress toward full access to excellent educators for all Montana children with our primary efforts focused on the needs of Montana’s most disadvantaged children. Montanans are committed to ensuring equal access by all students to well-prepared, highly qualified, experienced, and appropriately assigned teachers and school leaders with an emphasis on schools and classrooms with the greatest needs.

To shape the 2015 Montana State Plan, a team of key leaders at the OPI led by the assistant superintendent of the Education Services Department, followed these steps. The OPI team:

1. Developed and is implementing Montana’s strategic action plan and timeline for engaging education stakeholders in the process. (Attachment A)
2. Reviewed data provided by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the data collected and analyzed at the state level.
3. Addressed root-cause analyses based on the data reviewed and through discussions with education stakeholder groups.

4. Created a plan to measure and report progress on closing the equity gap and continuously improve the state plan.

Background: 2006 Montana State Equity Plan

The 2006 Montana State Equity Plan established the goal that every teacher of a core academic subject in Montana's public elementary and secondary schools must meet the ESEA requirements for Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT).

In 2004-2005, the OPI collected data that:

1. Identified core academic subject classes in the state that were not being taught by teachers meeting the HQT definition by specific subject area.
2. Were analyzed to determine adequate yearly progress of schools and districts where these classes were located.
3. Identified the schools in Montana where teachers were misassigned or not endorsed in the subject areas they were teaching.
4. Tracked courses that were particularly hard to staff.

Based on these data, the 2006 state plan established strategies to assist all Montana accredited schools in reaching the goal of 100 percent of core academic subject classes taught by HQTs. From the 2006 state plan to the development and implementation of the 2015 state plan, annual data verifies that virtually all of Montana's classes in core academic subjects are taught by HQTs, consistent with the ESEA requirements. The 2005 data indicate that 98.9 percent of the total number classes were taught by highly qualified teachers; and in 2013, 99.4 percent of core classes were taught by HQTs. The NCLB Report Card is posted on the OPI website <http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data>. While Montana reports consistent percentages near 100 in the all category of core academic subject classes taught by HQTs, the 100 percent HQT goal for schools, districts, and the state remains elusive. As documented in 2004, 1.1 percent of all core classes and .6 percent of the all core classes in 2013 were taught by teachers not highly qualified. Montana maintains its commitment to reach 100 percent equitable distribution of qualified, in-field, and experienced teachers teaching all Montana's K-12 students.

Review of Current Available Data

The OPI team reviewed the Montana Educator Equity Profile data prepared by the ED. Specifically, the OPI examined the 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data submitted by some of Montana's school districts. The OPI team reviewed two sets of CRDC data, including percent of non-licensed teachers and percent of classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified. Also, the team examined 2012-2013 EDFacts data that Montana provided to ED on classes taught by HQTs. The Division of Measurement and Accountability collected and reconciled these disparate state and national data sources using the equity gaps identified by the OPI team. Based on these gaps the OPI team created an action plan and timeline outlining targeted strategies to meet the challenges underlying equity issues in Montana.

Over the past several years, Montana has systematically created powerfully integrated data systems that include student information, teacher and school leaders, educator licensure, accreditation, salary and compensation, etc. While the data systems are in place, these systems are not yet able to provide the comprehensive data reports to specific issues, i.e., average teacher salaries, experienced teachers, or mobility. However, as Montana's data systems mature and become more robust, data requests and

reports will more accurately identify key issues and effective strategies to steadily improve equitable distribution of teachers across the state.

Section 2. Consultation with Stakeholders

The OPI meets regularly with stakeholders representing professional education associations, postsecondary education entities, Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education (MACIE), Title I and Special Education committees of practitioners, and other groups of concerned citizens to share updates and call for comments on major areas of work. Prior to submitting a draft state plan to ED, the OPI team met twice with these groups as part of the state process. The purpose of the first meeting with education stakeholders was to introduce the state plan process and timeline. During the second meeting, stakeholders provided comments and perspectives on the data, root causes of identified equity gaps, and equity plan strategies. In addition, the stakeholder groups offered solutions to identified equity issues.

The OPI team will routinely involve education stakeholders in ongoing support and commitment to the systemic implementation of the Montana plan. The education stakeholders will provide essential knowledge from their viewpoints to enrich the statewide dialogue and action in ongoing data reviews, root-cause analyses, and monitoring and adjustment of strategies.

Section 3. Equity Gap Analysis

Montana is committed to closing the equity gap between high- and low-poverty school quartiles and high- and low-minority school quartiles. Montana compared student access to teachers who are highly qualified in the highest- and lowest-poverty schools, as well as the highest- and lowest-minority schools, and found that the gaps were present in both high-poverty and high-minority secondary schools.

Terms and Definitions

The 2015 Montana State Plan uses the following terms as defined below:

1. **Unqualified Teacher:** Montana teachers who do not meet all of the following requirements: 1) active Montana license, 2) endorsed in a teachable subject area, and 3) assigned to teach classes in their endorsed subject area(s).
2. **Inexperienced:** Montana teachers with less than one year of teaching experience.
3. **Out-of-Field:** Montana-licensed teachers teaching outside their endorsed subject areas.
4. **Poverty:** The determination of poverty is based on the percentage of students at a school who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches through the National School Lunch Program. For the purposes of this report, schools served under Provision 2 ¹ were credited with 100 percent eligibility for free lunch.

¹ Provision 2 is an option in the federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program for schools to reduce the paperwork and simplify the logistics of operating school meals programs. Any school that participates in the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program may opt for Provision 2. Schools that opt for Provision 2 serve meals to all students at no charge. Provision 2 schools pay the difference between the cost of serving meals at no charge to all students and the federal reimbursement. The significant administrative savings of Provision 2 help offset the cost differential. (National School Lunch Act. USDA www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/provisions)

5. **Minority Groups:** In the 2010-2011 school year, Montana transitioned from asking students a single race question (with six categories) to a two-part race/ethnicity question that generates seven categories. The two questions asked:
- Are you (the student) of Hispanic ethnicity?
 - What is the student's race or races? (Choose from American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and White)

All students who answer "yes" to the first question are classified as Hispanic, regardless of their answers on the race question. The structure of the question allows students to identify as "multiracial," which was not a category in the prior race/ethnicity classification.

The categories are now:

- Hispanic
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African-American
- White
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Multi-Racial/Two or More Races

To identify "minority quartiles," students were classified as minorities if they identified as anything other than "white," not Hispanic. In the 2013-2014 fall enrollment, 80 percent of students identified as white. Over half of the minority population (11 percent of the remaining 20 percent) identified as "American Indian, Not Hispanic." More students chose the American Indian/Alaska Native category, but were classified as either Hispanic or multiracial.

- **Highly qualified teacher (HQT):** Montana teachers meet the definition of HQT if they are licensed, endorsed, in their second year or more of teaching, and assigned to teach "core academic subject"² classes in the areas of preparation. The requirement that teachers be "highly qualified" applies to all public elementary and secondary school teachers who teach a "core academic subject class" and are employed by Montana school districts.
- **Equitable teacher distribution:** Teachers are distributed throughout Montana so that high-poverty, minority, special needs, or English language learners are just as likely to be taught by HQTs working in their field as students who do not fall into those categories.

Relevant Data - Background

The OPI compared data between the 2005 original analysis and 2013 data. Comparisons of data by schools and school districts were based on student enrollment numbers aggregated by minority and poverty calculations.

Although additional teacher data are not available at this time, the OPI anticipates the teacher licensure system, Montana State Educator Information System (MSEIS), will deliver additional data (e.g., percent

² "Core academic subjects" are English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography. (ESEA, 2002)

of teachers in first year) in the next few years. Montana's Terms of Employment, Accreditation and Master Schedule (TEAMS) will provide additional data.

For purposes of the 2015 Montana State Plan, Montana will use HQT data to analyze the percentage of highly qualified teachers in schools, which are aggregated based on percentage of poor and minority students. Schools are aggregated then divided into high-poverty school quartiles, neither high- nor low-poverty school quartiles, and low-poverty school quartiles. The same process also applies to schools aggregated by minority student percentages.

Data Analysis

School Quartile Analysis: Poverty Schools

Schools were divided into quartiles by percent enrollment of students who were considered meeting the poverty criteria (see page 4, Terms and Definitions).

The top quartile of schools (205 schools) averaged a student poverty enrollment percentage of almost 78 percent versus the lowest quartile of schools (205), which averaged a student poverty enrollment of only 18 percent (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Analysis of School Poverty Student Population Quartiles

2013 Poverty Quartile	Schools	Students in Poverty	Enrolled Students	Percent Poverty
HIGH	205	20055	25813	77.7%
NEITHER	408	35515	89829	39.5%
LOW	205	4926	27155	18.1%

School Quartile Analysis: Minority Schools

Similarly in the analysis of enrollment percent of students who were minorities (see Terms and Definitions, Minority Groups), the top quartile of schools had percentages of students who were minority of 45.4 percent versus the low quartile of schools where the percent of minority students was only 2.9 percent (See Table 2 below).

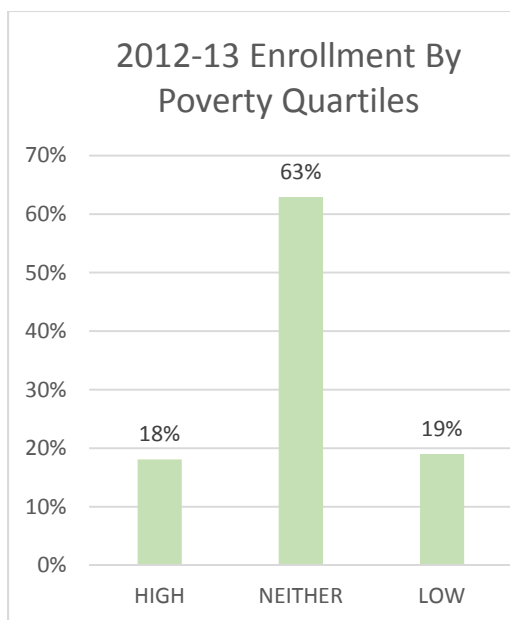
Table 2 Analysis of School Minority Student Population Quartiles

2013 Minority Quartile	Schools	Minority Students	Enrolled	Percent Minority
HIGH	206	17666	38897	45.4%
NEITHER	407	9839	94464	10.4%

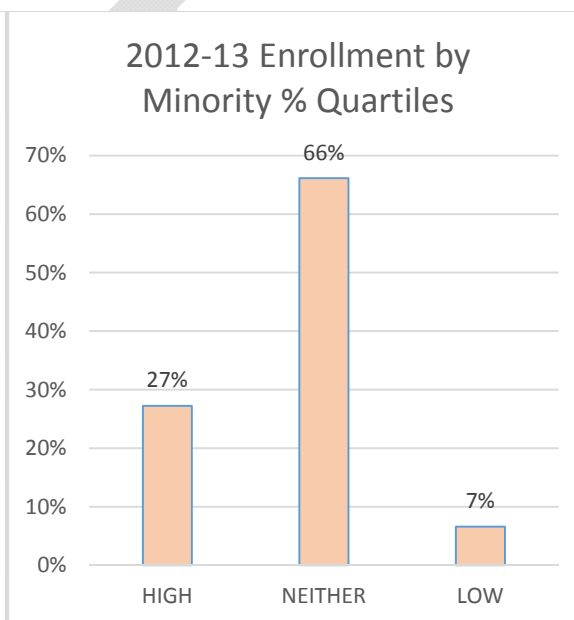
LOW 205 271 9436 2.9%

When HQT percentages are analyzed using poverty or minority quartiles of schools, total school enrollment between high-poverty, neither high- nor low-poverty, and low-poverty schools is not evenly distributed. Enrollment is strongly centered in the middle two quartiles. Enrollment in schools by minority quartiles is a “fat tail” distribution with 66 percent of enrollment in the “neither high nor low” quartile and only 7 percent of enrollment in the low minority percentage quartile. See Graphs 1 and 2 below.

Graph 1 Enrollment by Poverty Quartiles



Graph 2 Enrollment by Minority Quartiles



Graphs 1 and 2 above confirm that the majority of total school enrollments are in the neither high nor low percentage quartiles.

Poverty Schools: Comparisons Between 2005 and 2013 of all Poverty Schools and HQT Assignments

Analysis of 2005 compared to 2013 data indicates that Montana made improvements in the percentage of HQTs teaching core academic classes in all schools. In eight of 12 categories delineated in Tables 1 and 2 on page 7, Montana shows a statistically significant increase in the numbers and percentages of HQTs assigned to teach core academic subject classes.

HQT Analysis

Table 1 on page 7 displays HQT results increased by .5 percent in the all schools quartile between 2005 and 2013. While the majority of the increases in three of the four quartiles were statistically significant, the low-poverty quartile reported no increase and remains at 99.1 percent of core academic subject classes taught by qualified teachers. This result means fewer children need to be included in the target area of the 2015 equitable access plan.

Elementary and Secondary Schools Analysis

Elementary schools across three of the four poverty quartiles showed a statistically significant improvement of .3 percent of HQTs assigned to teach core academic subject classes between 2005 and 2013 (Table 2, Page 7). The low-poverty quartile increased .1 percent of HQT appropriately assigned over the same period.

While secondary schools in the high-poverty quartile had the lowest HQT percentages (96.9 percent in 2005 and 97.6 percent in 2013), the data indicate improvement. From 2005 to 2013, the percentage of HQTs teaching core academic subject classes increased by .7 percent in the high-poverty quartile. The OPI team anticipates the HQT percentage will increase from 97.6 to 98.3 percent for high-poverty secondary schools within the next few years if the increases continue to improve at a similar rate.

The .7 percent gain in the high-poverty quartile was equal to the overall increase for all secondary schools. Even with increases over time in HQT assignments, targeted strategies are needed to help secondary schools recruit, develop, and retain qualified, endorsed, and experienced teachers.

Tables 3 and 4 on page 7 show the percentages of the HQTs teaching core subject classes in the schools based on the poverty quartiles and compares results between 2005 and 2013. In addition, confidence interval analysis helps demonstrate whether the changes are statistically significant.

Table 3 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 Poverty Quartiles by All Schools HQT Percentage

Poverty Quartiles	2005 Percentile of HQT Assignments	2013 Percentile of HQT Assignments	Statistically Significant (95 Percent Confidence) Improvement
HIGH	98.2%	98.7%	TRUE
NEITHER	99.1%	99.6%	TRUE
LOW	99.1%	99.1%	FALSE
ALL	98.9%	99.4%	TRUE

Table 4 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 Poverty Quartiles by Elementary and Secondary Schools

Poverty Quartiles	2005 Percentile of HQT Assignments	2013 Percentile of HQT Assignments	Statistically Significant (95 Percent Confidence) improvement
Elementary			
HIGH	98.9%	99.2%	FALSE
NEITHER	99.3%	99.6%	TRUE
LOW	99.2%	99.3%	FALSE
All Elementary	99.2%	99.5%	TRUE
Secondary			
HIGH	96.9%	97.6%	TRUE
NEITHER	98.7%	99.6%	TRUE
LOW	99.0%	99.1%	FALSE
All Secondary	98.6%	99.3%	TRUE

Table 5 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 Elementary and Secondary Schools in High- and Low-Poverty Quartiles

Quartiles	2005 percentile HQT	2013 Percentile HQT
Elementary		
High Poverty Quartile (HPQ)	98.9%	99.2%
Low Poverty Quartile (LPQ)	99.2%	99.3. %
Percentile Difference	.3%	.1%
Secondary		
High Poverty Quartile (HPQ)	96.9%	97.6%
Low Poverty Quartile (LPQ)	99.0%	99.1%
Percentile Difference	2.1%	1.5%

Analysis

Further analyses of the data shown in Tables 3 and 4 on page 8, and reported in Table 5 above, offered a clue to one of the challenges to closing the equity gap between high- and low-poverty students. In Table 5, the OPI team compared data between 2005 and 2013 by elementary and secondary schools in high- and low-poverty quartiles. These data show that secondary students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of poverty in 2005 were 2.1 percent less likely to be placed with HQTs than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of poverty. By 2013, that gap closed to 1.5 percent. While the gap has decreased, these data provide the OPI with clear direction to concentrate our efforts and next steps to reach the goal of 100 percent HQTs in high-poverty secondary schools.

Minority Schools: Comparisons Between 2005 and 2013

The analysis of minority schools yields similar findings. Minority schools were not analyzed in 2005, so it was necessary to hypothesize the schools in that time using 2013 school information and applying the minority calculation based on the assumption that minority population distribution in the schools have not changed appreciably over time.

While the data from 2005 is extrapolated using 2013 school information, these data reflect the best estimate, other than accounting for the few schools (18, mostly small schools) that did not exist in 2005. Again, results are similar to the poverty school analysis.

Minority Quartiles Analysis

Tables 6 and 7 (page 10) indicate increases in HQT assignments occurred in almost all minority schools quartiles, and some increases are significant. These significant increases are noted in the percentage of HQT in high- and neither high- nor low-minority schools. In secondary schools, the percentage of HQT in high-minority schools shows the smallest increase of HQTs.

Table 6 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 Minority Quartiles by All Schools HQT Percentage

Minority Quartiles	2005 Percentile HQT Assignments	2013 Percentile HQT Assignments	Statistically Significant (95 percent Confidence) Improvement
HIGH	98.6%	98.8%	TRUE
NEITHER	99.1%	99.7%	TRUE
LOW	98.4%	98.6%	FALSE
ALL	98.9%	99.4%	TRUE

Table 7 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 Minority Quartiles by Elementary and Secondary Schools

Minority Quartiles	2005 Percentile HQT Assignments	2013 Percentile HQT Assignments	Statistically Significant (95 Percent Confidence) Improvement
Elementary			
HIGH	99.0%	99.2%	FALSE
NEITHER	99.3%	99.7%	TRUE
LOW	98.6%	98.9%	FALSE
All Elementary	99.1%	99.5%	TRUE
Secondary			
HIGH	98.0%	98.3%	FALSE
NEITHER	98.9%	99.6%	TRUE
LOW	98.2%	98.1%	FALSE
All Secondary	98.7%	99.3%	TRUE

Table 8 Comparison of 2005 and 2013 HQT Assignments in High- and Low-Poverty and High- and Low-Minority Quartiles by Secondary Schools

	Secondary Schools	2005 Percentile HQT Assignments	2013 Percentile HQT Assignments	Differences
Percent of classes taught by teachers who are Highly Qualified	High Poverty Quartile (HPQ)	96.9%	97.6%	.7% Increase
	Low Poverty Quartile (LPQ)	99.0%	99.1%	.1% Increase
	ALL PQ	98.6%	99.3%	.7% Increase
	High Minority Quartile (HMQ)	98.0%	98.3%	.3% Increase
	Low Minority Quartile (LMQ)	98.2%	98.1%	.1% Decrease
	ALL MQ	98.7%	99.3	.6% Increase

Analysis

As presented in Table 8 above, data indicate that between 2005 and 2013, equitable distribution of HQTs improved in high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority secondary schools in five of the eight quartiles. Although not all increases are statistically significant, the HPQ and the all PQ increases of .7 percent, and HMQ increases .3 percent and all MQ of .6 percent are statistically significant.

The data analysis further examines the differences between high-poverty and high-minority quartiles and low-poverty and low-minority and provides a look at the data from another perspective. These differences are shown in the Table 7 on page 11. In 2005, the difference between the percentages of HPQ (96.9 percent) and HMQ (98.0 percent) is 1.1 percent; and .8 percent between the percentages of LPQ (99.0 percent) and LMQ (98.2 percent). In 2013, the difference between the percentages of HPQ (97.6 percent) and HMQ (98.3 percent) is .7 percent; and 1 percent between the 2013 percentages of LPQ (99.1 percent) and LMQ (98.1 percent). These data indicate an overall improvement of equitable distribution of HQTs in high-poverty secondary schools and to a lesser degree in high-minority secondary schools.

In Table 9, comparing high-poverty and high-minority secondary schools in 2005, students attending high poverty schools were 1.1 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs. The 2013 data indicate that these students were .7 percent less likely to take classes from HQTs.

Low-poverty schools data reveal a different picture. In 2005, data of low-poverty and low-minority school quartiles indicate that students attending low-minority schools were .8 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs; and in 2013, 1.0 percent of students attending low-minority schools were less likely to be taught by HQTs.

Table 9 Comparisons of 2005 and 2013 Secondary Schools in High- and Low-Poverty and High- and Low-Minority Quartiles

Quartiles	2005 Percentile HQT	2013 Percentile HQT
High Poverty Quartile (HPQ)	96.9%	97.6%
High Minority Quartile (HMQ)	98.0%	98.3%
Percent Difference	1.1%	.7%
Low Poverty Quartile (LPQ)	99.0%	99.1%
Low Minority Quartile (LMQ)	98.2%	98.1%
Percent Difference	.8%	1.0%

Qualified/Licensed Teacher Data

Pursuant to Montana Code Annotated (MCA) and the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), all teachers are required to be licensed and endorsed in the subjects they are assigned to teach in every Montana accredited schools. Through the Terms of Employment, Accreditation, and Master Schedule (TEAMS), accredited schools in Montana report annually teacher qualifications, class schedules, and hours of instruction. These data verify licensure and endorsement to determine HQT status of teachers teaching core academic subject classes and which core academic subject classes are taught by teachers not meeting the HQT definition. In addition, TEAMS data collection also identifies school districts that assign teachers to teach out of field subject areas and school districts that employ nonlicensed teachers.

Table 10 Comparison of the 2005 and 2013 Final Accreditation Status of All Schools by Number of Out of Field and Nonlicensed Teachers

2005	Number of Teachers	2013	Number of Teachers
Out of field Assignments	114	Out of field Assignments	81
Nonlicensed teachers	42	Nonlicensed teachers	20

Rural Locales/Rural/Remote

“All states have rural locales, but not all states can be considered a rural state as a whole. There are a small number of states that, by commonly accepted metrics of state rurality, are recognized to be rural and Montana is one of those states. When considering a combination of four indices of state rurality metrics, Montana is one of only three states that are characterized as having a High Percent of Overall Rurality and also having Very Isolated/Remote Rural Communities. The very rural/isolated nature of Montana is one of the primary elements of influence on there being inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers in Montana Public Schools.”³

³ Chirs Lohse and Jennifer Davis, “Understanding the Gradients of “Rural”: A guide to the various definitions of “rural” and their implications for states,” *Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Research, Development, and Dissemination Service (2008)*

Comparison among states based on the four composite indices of rurality is provided in Table 11 below. Data sources include U.S. Census, Office of Management and Budget, and National Center for Educational Statistics. These indices and data sources were compiled to represent a single index value between 0 and 10 as represented in the table below. (Attachment B)

Table 11 Composite of Four Indices: Coarse Rural Index, Fine Rural Index, Extreme Rural Index, and Frontier Rural Index.

	Course Rural Index	Fine Rural Index	Extreme Rural Index	Frontier Index	Composite of Indices
North Dakota	8.2	10	10	5.5	8.4
South Dakota	8.5	9.3	9.8	5.1	8.2
Montana	8.6	7.3	5.3	7.1	7.1
Wyoming	8	-	-	10	5.8
Alaska	-	4.5	3.4	7.6	5.2
Vermont	9.7	5.2	-	-	4.1
New Hampshire	9.7	5.2	-	-	4.1
Kansas	-	-	3.8	-	3.6
Maine	8.3	4.6	-	-	3.5
Nebraska	-	4.9	5.2	-	3.5
Alabama	8.7	-	-	-	3.4
Arkansas	-	-	-	3.2	3.2
New Mexico	-	-	-	3.9	-

Identify and Explain the Equity Gaps

The 2006 Montana State Plan focused primarily on the assignments of HQTs teaching core academic subject classes. In addition to the HQTs assignments across all quartiles, the 2015 state plan compares data of high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority schools and students. While the percentages are statistically low, the data revealed unacceptable equity gaps that affect high-poverty and high-minority schools and students. Montana's identified equity gaps are described below:

1. Secondary students in the quartile of schools with the highest percentage of poverty in 2005 were 2.1 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of poverty. By 2013, that gap closed to 1.5 percent.
2. Between high-poverty and high-minority secondary schools in 2005, students attending schools in the high minority quartile were 1.1 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs. The 2013 data indicate that these secondary students were .7 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs.
3. Low-poverty schools' data reveal a different picture. In 2005, data of low-poverty and low-minority school quartiles indicate that students attending low-minority schools were .8 percent less likely to be taught by HQTs; and in 2013, 1.0 percent of students attending low-minority schools were less likely to be taught by an HQT.
4. Highest minority quartile schools' enrollment is predominantly American Indian. These data remain unchanged between the 2005 and 2013.

Root-Cause Analysis (Under construction)

Two essential factors to consider in regards to these schools are their extremely rural nature and the high numbers of students in poverty. There is a need for HQTs in high poverty schools. Specifically, there is a lack of qualified secondary teachers in schools with high- and low-poverty and high- and low-minority student enrollment.

The rural nature and high poverty can often lead to turbulent systems where stable administration and teaching staff are difficult to attain or maintain. Such circumstances can lead to late recruitment for key positions within the district, while other more stable districts complete their hiring process in a timely manner that allows these districts to recruit and place HQTs first.

Pay, benefits, working conditions, and cultural issues contribute to the challenges of recruiting, hiring, retaining high quality secondary school teachers. Larger districts have better compensation and benefits packages. Teachers in small rural schools often feel isolated with a limited support system. Mentoring can be difficult when there are so few staff in rural schools. Often "good teachers" move on because they are qualified enough to teach at a larger, better paying school.

Often difficulty in locating housing and other important life considerations, e.g., access to medical care, shopping, and other necessities adds problems of hiring retaining HQTs. The isolation is often difficult for staff that are not from these communities. There are many stories of staff being hired, moving to the community and then promptly leaving or lasting part of the school year before leaving.

Section 4. Strategies to Advance the Work of Closing the Equity Gaps

To ensure continuing equity in teacher preparation, recruitment, assignments, retention, and ongoing professional growth, the OPI and stakeholders will concentrate on technical assistance, professional learning, relevant resources, mentoring, and monitoring effectiveness of high-poverty and high-minority schools. Strategies and programs will carefully address the issues of high-poverty and high-minority schools in Montana. Also attend to the needs of school districts with significant numbers of minority students, in particular districts with high percentage of American Indian students.

Montana's data system, with major improvements since 2006, permits the OPI to identify high-poverty districts and schools, as well as those with concentrations of American Indians, falling short of our HQT goal. The data indicate that current equity issues are not demonstrative of inequitable distribution of qualified and endorsed teachers. Still, Montana has not achieved full equity for all school districts and for all children. The following strategies and programs will help Montana ensure that poor and minority children are taught by experienced, qualified, and out-of-field teachers on parity with all other children.

1. Educator Talent Development Strategies

In March 2013, the Board of Public Education (BPE) adopted the superintendent's recommendation to expand eligibility for the (student) loan forgiveness program to elementary teachers in rural, high-poverty areas. Beginning in 2013-2014 school year, elementary school teachers in a special education cooperative or an impacted school with a total score of 15 or higher also are eligible for the loan forgiveness program. There are 97 elementary and middle schools which meet the criteria. The Educator Talent Development Strategies Program offers incentives for teachers to take teaching positions in elementary, middle grades, and high school in high-poverty areas. The program requires teachers remain in the program for four years to qualify for loan forgiveness.

Since 2010, over a thousand teachers have benefitted from the quality educator loan forgiveness program. These quality educators are working in schools identified as impacted schools (isolation and poverty index) and teaching in licensure or endorsement areas impacted by critical quality educator shortages.⁴

2. Schools of Promise

Since 2011, the OPI has used the federal school improvement grant (SIG) opportunity to enter into comprehensive school improvement partnerships with some of the state's lowest performing schools, known as the "Schools of Promise" initiative. These schools, identified as "persistently lowest achieving," are all located on an Indian reservation and face dire circumstances related to poverty and extreme isolation. Through a unique, collaborative partnership, the OPI places three to four full-time staff members in each location that work alongside school staff to create greater system stability, stronger infrastructure, and better overall student outcomes. In particular, this work helps school leaders (boards of trustees and administrators) recruit, retain, and support strong educators who will impact the learning environment.

3. Montana Striving Readers Project (MSRP)

⁴ 20-4-503 MCA. Critical quality educator shortages

This project assists high need schools with intensive professional development for teachers following the framework of the Montana Literacy Plan. This high-quality, intensive development for teachers and administrators gives them opportunities to become some of the best-prepared educators in the state with the ability to close the achievement gaps that have existed for their students in the past.

4. Title I School Support System

This system provides ongoing close support to help teachers and administrators in schools that have been in Restructuring for several years to improve their practices and upgrade skills. The system, in partnership with the Schools of Promise Initiative, provided training for administrators in Instructional Leadership from the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL). This training assisted the administrators to become more effective instructional leaders and taught them how to better assist teaching staff to meet the challenges they face in improving instruction for high needs students.

6. Recruitment, Hiring, Development, and Retention of Qualified Teachers

The OPI enlists assistance and support from key stakeholders to generate plans to help school districts with recruitment and retention of administration and teaching staff, teacher performance appraisals and professional growth, and other issues of improving school climate, instructional quality and authenticity. Key stakeholders include Montana Small Schools Association, Montana Rural Education Association, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Association, and MEA-MFT. These organizations provide ongoing support, professional learning, technical resources, and access to outreach for Montana education networks.

7. Developing and Supporting Turn Around School Leaders

In September 2015, Rocky Mountain College Master of Educational Leadership program was notified by the ED that the competitive grant application seeking funds for the "Developing and Supporting Turnaround School Leaders" grant was awarded. As a result of the \$1.5 million funding, the grant provides professional development, technology, and support to leaders in seven high-needs districts as identified by the OPI. The overarching goals of the grant are to recruit, train, place, support and retain turnaround leaders in SIG LEAs in Montana.

8. School Climate Grant

The OPI obtained a school climate grant from the ED. The focus of this grant is to increase use of evidence-based practices for implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in Montana schools. The MTSS model leads to improved school climate, actively supported teachers, and improved academic outcomes for students. All of these factors improve recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

9. Higher Education Consortium (HEC) and Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR)

For over 10 years, the OPI has been bringing together teacher preparation staff from the Montana IHEs to align programs with the needs of local school districts. This group is known as the HEC. Its work helps to assure teachers entering Montana schools are prepared to provide quality instruction to children. The work of the HEC originally focused on preparing special education teachers. Through the years, its focus evolved to preparation for all teachers. Currently, the HEC is working with the CEEDAR center to further efforts to provide HQTs for Montana schools.

10. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

The OPI operates a CSPD throughout Montana. This system is based in five regions responsive to the professional development and technical assistance needs of schools in each region. Through this system, the OPI makes available high quality professional development to every teacher in the state.

11. Revised Standards of Accreditation

In September 2013 the BPE approved ARM Title 10, Chapter 55 Standards of Accreditation. Included in these rules are requirements for local districts to renew teacher and school leader evaluation systems. The revised standards are based on the foundation that high-quality, high-performing teachers and school leaders are critical to ensure student learning. An evaluation system based in professional growth for all educators will help to foster learning environments that meet the needs of all students. The OPI, in consultation with stakeholders, developed a state model: the Montana Educator Performance Appraisal System (MT-EPAS). This standards-based evaluation system is designed to encourage professional learning through a continuum of career development. The state model was launched in August 2013. Montana school districts are encouraged to adopt or adapt the state model, or to review and revise the local evaluation system to meet state standards. The OPI provides free statewide and regional workshops to assist school districts implement the revised standards.

12. Montana New Teach Induction Project

The purpose of the Montana New Teacher Induction Project is to establish a revitalized induction and mentoring network for districts to support their efforts to meet the ARM 10.55.701(5)(b) by establishing induction and mentoring programs in each school district. To this end, the OPI is partnering with The New Teacher Center (NTC) to help accelerate new teacher professional growth and impact student achievement through design and implementation of high-quality teacher induction and mentoring programs. The OPI and NTC have developed free statewide induction institutes and instructional mentoring workshops beginning in March 2015 and continuing through January 2016. This professional development program is designed for induction program leadership teams that are about to implement a new induction program or who are looking to enhance their current programs. The link below will describe the content of the induction institutes, provide dates and times, and a link to the registration.

13. Regional Teacher Sharing.

Sharing the services of properly licensed and endorsed teachers for schools with hard-to-fill positions in core academic subjects among districts ensuring equity in teacher quality among schools. The OPI is working with the Montana Association of School Superintendents, MEA-MFT, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Association, Montana Small Schools Alliance, Tribal Education Departments and Councils, and the Regional Education Service Areas to expand a regional system to equitably distribute HQT to teach in core academic subjects.

14. Regional Education Service Areas

The mission of the five Regional Education Service Areas (RESA) is to establish a systemic approach that identifies regional school district personnel needs and provides support to local school districts through communication, direct interaction, follow-up, and ongoing collaboration. The RESA directors work collaboratively with the OPI to deliver regionally state initiatives, projects, and programs to Montana teachers and administrators. Currently, the RESA directors work with the OPI in the following areas that

are directly connected to closing the identified equity gaps: New Teacher Induction Project, MT-EPAS, Gifted and Talented Education, Indian Education grant support, and content specific professional learning for classroom teachers.

Section 5. Measuring Progress Toward Closing the Equity Gaps

Montana will continue to evaluate equity gaps between high- and low-poverty quartile schools and high- and low-minority quartile schools using HQT data. This is the most reliable long term data available. It will provide a long term analysis to establish a trend line. Montana will see continued progress similar to the progress shown from 2004-2005 to 2012-2013 and will closely monitor that trend line in future years.

Section 6. Reporting Progress Toward Closing the Equity Gaps

Montana has a robust longitudinal data system that accommodates publication of these data. Further, the 2015 Montana Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators will be published on the OPI website under *Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT)*. The OPI team will review the data annually, make adjustments, and generate interim reports to stakeholders.

http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/Federal/index.html?gpm=1_6

Section 7. Conclusion

Under construction

Attachment A - Montana Equitable Access Planning Timeline

Major Activities	Parties Involved	Organizer	Time Frame	
I. Develop Timeline	Team	Nancy	12/30/2014	
II. Denise Approves Timeline		Dennis	1/7/2015	
III. Data				
A. Gather & Review	Team	Sue	11/20/2014	1/15/2015
B. Analyze	Team and M&A Staff	Sue and Staff	2/28/2015	
C. Identification of Equity Gaps	Team	Sue and Staff	2/28/2015	
D. Prepare Data to Share with Stakeholders		Sue and Staff	2/28/2015	
IV. Communication with Stakeholders	Team		1/15/2015	5/15/2015
A. MACIE (Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education) Meetings				
Introduction	Mandy and Nancy	Mandy	1/12/2015	
Share Draft	Mandy and Nancy	Mandy	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Mandy	4/27/2015	
B. Special Education Advisory Panel				
Introduction	Frank	Frank	1/22/2015	
Share Draft (electronically)	Frank	Frank	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Frank	4/27/2015	
C. Title I Committee of Practitioners				
Introduction (electronically)	BJ	BJ	1/22/2015	
Share Draft	BJ	BJ	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		BJ	4/27/2015	
D. Board of Public Education				
Introduction	Nancy	Nancy	3/13/2015	
Share Draft (electronically)	Nancy	Nancy	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Nancy	4/27/2015	
E. OPI Leadership Council				
Introduction	Nancy	Dennis	1/30/2015	
Share Draft	Nancy	Dennis	4/8/2015	

Attachment A - Montana Equitable Access Planning Timeline

Major Activities	Parties Involved	Organizer	Time Frame	
Suggestions to Team		Dennis	4/27/2015	
F. OPI Website				
Introduction		Linda	2/15/2015	
Share Draft		Linda	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Linda	4/27/2015	
G. Educators Evaluation Systems Work Team				
Introduction	Linda	Linda	1/13/2015	
Share Draft	Linda	Linda	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Linda	4/27/2015	
H. Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Board (CSPAC)				
Introduction	Linda	Linda	2/6/2015	
Share Draft	Linda	Linda	4/8/2015	
Suggestions back to Team	Linda	Linda	4/27/2015	
I. Montana Council of Deans of Education				
Introduction	Linda	Linda	1/19/2015	
Share Draft	Linda	Linda	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Linda	4/27/2015	
J. Higher Education Consortium				
Introduction	Frank	Frank	1/14/2015	
Share Draft	Frank	Frank	4/8/2015	
Suggestions to Team		Frank	4/27/2015	
V. Write Draft	Team			
A. Compile & Analyze past work on data	Team	Sue	2/28/2015	
B. Write draft narrative on Equity Gaps	Team	Linda	2/16/2015	3/6/2015
C. Identify Strategies	Team	Linda and/or BJ	2/26/2015	3/6/2015
D. Develop Timelines for expected results	Team	BJ	3/6/2015	3/13/2015
E. Develop Timeline for expected progress reports	Team	BJ	3/16/2015	3/20/2015

Attachment A - Montana Equitable Access Planning Timeline

Major Activities	Parties Involved	Organizer	Time Frame	
F. Write Draft of Progress Reports	Team	Dennis	3/23/2015	3/27/2015
G. Complete Draft	Team	Nancy	3/30/2015	4/7/2015
VI. Revise Draft	Team			
A. Compile Comments from Stakeholders	Team	Dennis	4/28/2015	5/7/2015
B. Select & Make Needed Changes to Draft	Team	Nancy	5/8/2015	5/20/2015
VII. Draft Submittal Letter from Denise to Department		Nancy	5/21/2015	
VIII. Obtain Final Approval from Denise Juneau		Dennis	5/26/2015	
IX. Submit to US Department of Education		Nancy	5/29/2015	
Prepared by Montana Office of Public Instruction Denise Juneau, Superintendent Draft of February 26, 2015				

Attachment B - Montana's Peer Groups Defined by Rural Character

State peer groups
defined by rural character

		% Rural Overall (Coarse Index)		
		Low	Mid	High
Degree of extreme or isolated rurality (Fine, Extreme, and Frontier Indices)	Very isolated/remote rural communities			North Dakota South Dakota Montana
	Mixed of large, small, and isolated rural communities		Nebraska	Maine Vermont
	Most not isolated but some extremely remote communities		Alaska	Wyoming
	Not isolated	<i>All Other States</i>	Alabama Arkansas Idaho Iowa Kansas New Hampshire New Mexico North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina Tennessee	Kentucky Mississippi West Virginia